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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000902

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [CASC](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: TOWN HALL MEETING AND ACS TRAVEL IN NORTHERN HAITI

REF: A) PORT AU PRINCE 714

11. Summary: ACS visited the Department of the North of Haiti from 7-Mar through 11-Mar-2005. ACS traveled throughout the region meeting with nearly 70 U.S. citizens and holding a town hall meeting in the city of Pignon. In Pignon, ACS also visited a hospital, an electrical cooperative, and an agricultural development site all involving large numbers of U.S. citizens. In Cap Haitian, ACS attempted to visit an imprisoned U.S. citizen, visited with the Warden responsible for the north of Haiti as well as three sub-wardens, paid visits to local civil and police officials, met with local American business leaders, the local representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), officials from the UN Civilian Police, and made other visits in support of other Embassy sections in order to report on the situation in the area in general. SEPTTEL to follow. This trip was extraordinarily successful and the personal contacts cultivated during the trip paid immediate dividends when an emergency situation arose involving an U.S. citizen in the north. End Summary.

12. Pignon is a city of 30,000 located approximately 40 miles to the southwest of Cap Haitian along Route Nationale 3. ACS held a very well received town hall meeting on 8 March that was attended by 17 Americans. Eight U.S. citizens were newly registered and one replacement passport application was executed after the meeting. ConOff first discussed the overall security situation in Haiti, the many personnel changes in the Consular Section, the electronic visa (e-Visa) program, and issues related to passport renewals. ConOff also discussed several talking points which were provided by Post's Public Diplomacy section including the activities of the USSOUTHCOM New Horizons Task Force and the successes of USG-funded anti-HIV/AIDS programs in Haiti. Participants were keenly interested in the Embassy's opinion of the security situation in light of the upcoming elections and requested Embassy assistance in applying pressure to the Haitian government in light of their perception of bureaucratic delays in adoptions in Haiti. Other consular-related questions fielded concerned the e-Visa program, assistance in the death of an American citizen abroad, and emergency passports.

13. Following the town hall meeting, ConOff met a flight of Missionary Flights International (MFI). MFI flies several trips weekly from West Palm Beach to Cap Haitian and/or Pignon. MFI ferries mostly American passengers and mail in support of member missionary organizations. Later in the day, ConOff visited the electrical co-operative in the town of Pignon which had just begun generating electricity, providing the town with its first street lights. The local Pignon cooperative - Cooperative Electricit de Pignon - is being developed in cooperation with the US-based, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association International (NRECA) who have been donating equipment and expertise to the Pignon cooperative. ConOff was then given a tour of the Hpital Bienfaisance de Pignon (Benevolent Hospital of Pignon) which was founded by a prominent expat doctor. The 60-bed hospital is well equipped and well-staffed, serving as a training hospital for doctors from three Haitian medical schools in Port-au-Prince. That evening, ConOff was able to visit for several hours with a medical team consisting of 20-25 Americans from the states of Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Minnesota. This medical team was conducting 8-10 reconstructive and laparoscopic surgeries per day at the hospital. The following day, 9 March, ConOff visited the e Haitian American Friendship Foundation (HAFF) compound which is home to approximately 15 U.S. citizens on a full-time basis. This compound hosts an experimental farm which is run by a US-based NGO called Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO). By chance, ConOff was able to hold an impromptu meeting with nearly 25 U.S. citizens visiting on behalf of ECHO.

14. In Cap Haitian, ConOff paid a courtesy visit to Inspector Ralph Dominique, Director of the Department of the North (Directeur du Dpartement de Nord or DDN) of the Haitian National Police on 10 March. ConOff discussed the case of imprisoned U.S. citizen Gerald Dorsainvil and requested the assistance of Inspector Dominique in facilitating a visit to the regional prison where Dorsainvil was purportedly

detained. Following the visit to DDN, ConOff visited the headquarters of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) meeting with several officials there including the Administrative, Logistics, and Public Affairs Officers. ConOff then traveled to the Cap Haitian International Airport to meet the daily MFI flight as well as the local MFI agents and sub-wardens Don and Karen Davis. Based on questions raised at the town hall meeting in Pignon, ConOff inquired as to whether MFI would assist the Consular Section in the evacuation or the repatriation of remains of a U.S. Citizen not affiliated with MFI. Ms Davis responded affirmatively that they would assist in both cases for the airports which they service including Port-au-Prince, Cap Haitian, Pignon, and Les Cayes.

15. In the afternoon, ConOff traveled to the regional prison to visit imprisoned U.S. Citizen Gerard Dorsainvil. There the warden showed ConOff Dorsainvil's dossier which showed that Dorsainvil had been released on 28 January 2005 after being found not guilty. REFTEL A contains further details regarding the release of Dorsainvil. Later, ConOff met with the local representative of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The local representative of the ICRC, Megan Rock, had previously provided the Consular Section with first notification of the detention of Gerald Dorsainvil when she discovered him in late October on one of her routine prisons visits in the north. ConOff thanked her again for her assistance in this matter and requested her continued assistance in similar situations. That evening, ConOff met with police officer Ralph Vieux, a U.S. police officer from South Florida who is the only U.S. Citizen among the MINSTUAH Civil Police contingent in Cap Haitian.

16. On 11 March, ConOff visited the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL) beach facility at Labadee and met with several of the U.S. citizen staff who are permanent residents at the facility. ConOff received a brief tour of the facility and discussed topics including crime, emergencies, evacuation for both U.S. citizen employees as well as U.S. citizen guests. An interesting note is, that according to one RCCL employee, approximately 80-85% of all guests on RCCL ships are U.S. citizens. As most ships visiting this facility have on average, 3,700 guests, which visit three times per week, this equates to approximately 12,000 U.S. citizens cycling through this facility each week. ConOff also paid a brief visit to the sub-warden responsible for the Labadee area.

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